

International Student Initiative at Castleton College
Consultancy Report

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December 2013

Introduction

The new strategic plan entitled “Castleton on the Move” identifies growth as one of its destinations and outlines a blueprint for its implementation in the next ten years. Its objective is to increase the undergraduate population “to approximately 2,500 through a measured, incremental process...while expanding our recruitment efforts into each of the fifty states and all countries where we can develop sound recruitment opportunities.” As part of this destination, the college plans to deploy new efforts directed at international markets to bring from outside the United States students who will thrive at Castleton. The college recognizes that international students who learn in its classrooms enrich its campus both academically and culturally. Moreover, by bringing more of the world to campus, international students will bring new diversity to the college, as well as generate additional revenue.

Because of these and countless other benefits, in October 2013, Castleton commenced a new international student initiative to create a more robust international student population. The college aims to have 5% of its student population come from foreign countries within the next ten years, which would be twice the state’s current international student population at 2.4% and higher than the current national average of 3.7%.¹ Assuming an overall 2,500 student enrollment, this 5% translates to 95 international students in addition to the 30 currently enrolled for a total of 125.

While the college has had initial success in recruiting, retaining and graduating international students, this portion of the student body is small in size and scope, with the current 30 students being predominantly from North America. Enrollment of students from farther afield more often results from individual faculty members’ and coaches’ recruitment efforts and is not the result of any international student recruitment strategy. The college recognizes this shortcoming and is currently working to develop such a strategy, with this report being the first step in the process.

Higher education institutions are at variance with their interpretations of the term, *international student*. Therefore, it is important to define this term for the immediate purpose of this report, but also for the Castleton community’s shared understanding as it proceeds with this new initiative. An international student at Castleton will meet the following three criteria: 1) does not have US citizenship, 2) is not a permanent resident of the US, and 3) requires a visa to attend college in the US. This is the definition of an international student at Castleton College.

Castleton’s Current International Student Body

The data below represents international students enrolled at Castleton in the 2013 fall term who are registered in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and are holders of an F-1 visa.

¹ *Where the International Students Are, State by State*, Ian Wilhelm, The Chronicle of Higher Education International, November 12, 2012.

International Students on F-1 Visas

Country of Origin	Number	Percentage of Total
Bermuda	1	3.3
Canada	21	70
Denmark	1	3.3
India	1	3.3
Latvia	1	3.3
Peru	1	3.3
Sweden	1	3.3
Taiwan	1	3.3
Zambia	1	3.3
<u>Total</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>100%</u>

International Students by Class

Class	Number	Percentage of Total
Freshman	10	33
Sophomore	11	36
Junior	2	6
Senior	5	16
Graduate	2	6

To maximize the retention, persistence and graduation rates of these and future international students at Castleton, comprehensive international student services are critical. The widely accepted view on campus is that current support for the college's international students is predominantly ad hoc responding to a specific need when it arises and dependent on the good will of a few key individuals at school and in the community. The chance of an international student thriving at Castleton today is largely determined by his/her personality and ability to seek help. (International student athletes are an exception to this, for they benefit immediately from the support network in the form of their team, especially in ice hockey.) While this ad hoc approach has worked to date, albeit with varying degrees of satisfaction, it will be inadequate as the college moves ahead with its new international student initiative.

The relationship between international student recruitment and student support services is highly inter-dependent. Effective recruitment of international students is dependent on what the college can provide specifically to this cohort; whereas, what the college can provide specifically to this cohort is dependent on the effective recruitment of international students. In terms of the sequencing of these two pieces, it is the classic chicken and egg riddle, begging the question "which should happen first?" The overwhelming opinion expressed by the interviewees, both internal and external to Castleton, is that the college must have more services in place to showcase to international candidates before going global with recruitment. This opinion may be unappealing to enthusiasts for this initiative, of which there are many. Nevertheless it is abundantly clear that along with almost unanimous support among students, faculty, and staff for international students on campus, there is also consensus that the college is simply not ready to receive them. But it can be.

This report is intended to guide Castleton as it moves forward with international student recruitment and retention. It is divided into two parts corresponding with the aforementioned pieces: student support services and recruitment. In most sections, recommendations for short, medium, and long term interventions are provided: short term meaning within one year, medium term being between one and three years, and long term beyond three years. Those recommendations that are accepted will be incorporated into a work plan and budget.

Input is welcomed, from all levels of the college, on this draft strategy. The document will be modified as needed to reflect current realities, unforeseen circumstances, and lessons learned during its implementation. The continuous feedback and iterative process will strengthen the strategy, and better ensure a successful outcome for international student recruitment and retention at Castleton.

Part I: Internationalizing Castleton

Comprehensive international student services are critical to having a positive experience while at Castleton. An international student will require the services of any Castleton student from matriculation to graduation, and as such, his/her life will touch every aspect of the college. Therefore, the need arises to “internationalize” all of these aspects of college life. Efforts must permeate every level of the college. Moreover, there will be other needs required by an international student, different from or in addition to a domestic student’s. These must also be addressed. Support for international students can be divided into two different categories--academic and student life—both of which are covered below. In addition, there are a number of more general issues that either bridge these two categories or exist at a higher level and should be addressed as well. It is worth noting that many of the recommendations to improve or grow these services are likely to mirror those required to grow the general undergraduate population as described under Destination 2 in the Castleton Strategic Plan. In other words, interventions to prepare for future international students potentially benefit all future Castleton undergraduates.

1. Academic

1.1 New Student Registration

Many first-year students visit campus for registration during the summer prior to the start of the school year, the primary purpose of which is registering for fall classes. It also offers a new student the opportunity to meet his/her first-year seminar instructor who also serves as the student’s advisor and to meet the Student Orientation Staff (SOS) leader who serves as his/her peer mentor. Proxy registration exists as an alternative process for those students unable to travel to campus during the summer. This entails multiple letters and phone calls to one of the Associate Deans and/or the Registrar. Castleton has established a committee to improve this time consuming and inefficient proxy process. This committee should keep in mind first-year international students when considering alternatives to the current process. There are a number of online tools that could help to facilitate registration of a student living overseas. For instance, a live Webinar could be developed, where the student participates in a registration session that is tailored to the specific needs of international students. Another option is to organize a live on-line chat for the student with a designated college representative—possibly, the first-year adviser, the SOS leader, or the international student admissions counselor. As an alternative to these online resources, the international new student registration could occur during the International Student Summer Transition Program on campus, or international student orientation, which will be discussed later in this document.

Recommendation: *In the short term, the “Proxy Committee” should consider ways to facilitate registration for first-year international students. Some options may be used also for domestic students unable to register in person, while others may need to be tailored more specifically for students living overseas.*

1.2 Academic Support Services

The Castleton Academic Support Center provides academic counseling, clinics, tutoring, and disability services to all Castleton students. The center’s staff offers clinics in writing and

math, and tutoring in all Castleton disciplines, which both international students and new Americans have utilized. Much of the academic support to students for whom English is their second language is provided by one part-time counselor who works less than 20 hours per week. All center staff have done what they can for the college's English learners with existing resources, and those students who have used the center speak highly of its staff. However, with the increased enrollment of international students the center will be expected to provide more instructional and tutoring services—formal and informal--to a larger clientele. These services will have to address student needs in the areas of writing, reading, vocabulary/terminology, speaking and pronunciation, use of academic technology, and academic English study skills. These support services will require the hiring of additional staff, at least one of whom should be ESL certified, to provide formal instruction as well as extra tutoring services. The physical space of the current center in Babcock Hall may become too small and in that case, considerations for additional space on campus will be required. In the immediate term, a number of workshops during the transitional program for entering international students should be offered with workshops offered periodically during the academic year. The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is another possible means to provide academic support for incoming international students. The college could designate one or more FYS sections as “international” with a blend of international and non-international students led by faculty members who have interest and/or experience in working with non-American students. Concurrently, an ESOL class could be paired with these international FYS sections. In the longer term, depending on the admissions requirements for international students, the college may wish to add an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class that offers college credit for those students who do not meet the minimum required English language test scores. Another formal course could be developed and offered that would introduce international students to the concept and nature of the American academic culture including its values, expectations, and activities.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, hire an ESL instructor, to provide instruction through clinics for incoming students (international and new Americans) and oversee the tutoring services for these students.*
- *In the short term, design academic workshops for the transitional program for new international students, and create opportunities (e.g. additional workshops, clinics) during the school year for skills reinforcement.*
- *In the short term, designate one or more FYS sections as “international”, possibly paired with an ESOL class, which would provide both academic support and community-building opportunities for incoming international students, and enable them to fulfill this graduation requirement.*
- *In the medium and long term, offer one or more, full or half credit courses for international students such as an ESOL class and an introduction to the academic culture.*

1.3 New Programs and “Tracks” of Study

Currently Castleton offers 30 majors in the liberal arts and sciences and two minors to its undergraduates, with a number of concentrations offered by the various departments. As part of its new 10-year strategic plan: “The college will thus ensure that the Castleton education

is responsive to the world of the twenty-first century.” This course of action will complement future efforts to internationalize academic life on campus. While considering new programs of study—majors, minors, concentrations—as well as additional course offerings, the college should consider how to create an international element to each of these. In deploying new efforts to recruit students from overseas, the college should match what these prospective students seek in a college education with the availability of more learning that transcends borders and is highly relevant to a global context. This could be achieved, for example, by the Business Administration Core offering an international business program that prepares graduates with business degrees to compete in the global economy. Similarly, the education program could include an international education concentration that prepares future educators to teach outside the US, again in a variety of national and cultural contexts, or within the US in schools where there is a significant new American student population.

Castleton currently offers six international courses in business, communications, economics, political science, and theatre arts. While there is a “Global Dynamics of Culture Concentration”, there are no classes explicitly on inter-cultural development or multi-culturalism offered at Castleton. This course would benefit the domestic students who have little or no previous experience with people from different cultures and will be further elaborated under the “Student Life” section below. The Global Studies program is small with currently fewer than ten students pursuing a major in it. While its major is demanding, requiring a foreign language and one 15-week cultural immersion experience, it would be an excellent opportunity as a minor for students studying business, education, economics or environment science, and other disciplines.

In addition to offering a richer academic experience through the infusion of international elements into a number of its programs, this will also improve Castleton’s public image as a college committed to helping to prepare the next generation of global citizens to solve the complex issues of our 21st century world, and will appeal to prospective international students planning to return to their home countries after college. This strengthened commitment to international issues should be on par with the college’s current commitment to civic engagement, community service and service-learning, and publicized as such. It should be evidenced by the future hiring of faculty and staff with an international background, promotion of the Global Studies program, and at least one course offering on inter-cultural development or multi-culturalism.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, promote the Global Studies program as a significant added value to certain majors (e.g., business, education, Spanish).*
- *In the short term, consider international background and/or experience of candidates for new faculty and staff hiring*
- *In the short term, create a workshop/session for new student orientation on multi-culturalism or inter-cultural development*
- *In the medium term, develop a new college course on the same subject offered by the Education or Sociology Departments.*
- *In the medium term, create new international tracks or concentrations in existing departments and programs (e.g., business, education).*

1.4 Summer Programs at Castleton

Colleges across the country offer summer programs to high school students, both domestic and international, as a marketing and recruitment strategy for their schools. Research shows that international students who attend summer programs at an American college are more likely to apply to that institution's undergraduate program than others. It is mentioned in this section of the report because it is another means to internationalize academic life on campus, but will be discussed in greater detail under the recruitment piece. Briefly, however, different types of summer programs that Castleton might consider are: English language training (ESOL), academic skills in higher education, or American culture and/or inter-cultural studies. It is an opportunity for Castleton faculty and staff who wish to work during the summer to do so, as well. If the college decides to consider adding this summer program option, regardless of the reason (internationalizing campus, as part of a recruitment strategy, or for revenue generation) additional research, beyond the scope of this report, would be required.

Recommendation: *In the medium term, a committee comprised of staff and faculty should explore the possibilities for commencing a summer program at Castleton College for international and domestic high school students with a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether this option is a viable one.*

2 Student Life

Transitioning to college life is difficult at times, even more so for those coming from a foreign country with different cultural norms. For some it may feel like they landed on a new planet with a different language, unknown values, and unfamiliar practices. It is incumbent on Castleton to provide a positive experience, from the initial welcome to the final send off, to all its students, which it already does through its comprehensive student services. To do this effectively however for international students, Castleton will have to modify slightly existing services to meet their particular needs as well as provide some additional support. The international students and new Americans interviewed for this report said that they simply needed more help at the outset and they felt awkward when they had to ask for it. This exemplifies the past practice of meeting individuals' needs as they arose, which worked--albeit with varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, in the future, this ad hoc approach will no longer suffice and the college must provide support in a significantly more proactive and systematic manner.

2.1 Residence Life

Given the relatively small number of campus residents (approximately 1,100), specialized housing has generally, not been needed. Instead the theme has traditionally been "Castleton housing". Sixty percent (60%) of returning students are mixed with 40% new students either in traditional corridor style halls, suites, or houses of which there are three (one of which is the wellness house and another is an honors house). As such, housing is highly integrated with students of all ages and interests living together in one building. This model should continue to be employed for international students, the vast majority of whom will be seeking

a cultural and English language immersion experience, per the college's new recruitment strategy, which will be discussed under this report's second major piece. Some students and staff suggested that the suites and houses may in some cases, have a slight advantage over the corridor style halls in that they provide an opportunity for the international student to get to know a larger number of domestic students, which may also help to alleviate some of the pressure of the domestic student who shares his/her room with an international student.

International students who must remain on campus during breaks, regardless of reason, should have the opportunity to stay in college housing at no additional cost. Currently, that is the case for all breaks with the exception of two weeks in December and January; but this should be reconsidered in light of a significant growth of international students.

Finally, Community Adviser training in the summer should include a session that aims to raise the awareness about international student issues and particular needs, and that provides these student leaders with tools and strategies for ensuring international students' inclusion in residential life.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, there should not be separate housing for international students, but integration within the general Castleton housing system, with further discussion about suite vs. corridor vs. house style living.*
- *In the short term, review the policy of "shutting down" the campus entirely during the two week period over winter break to allow international students to remain on campus.*
- *In the short term, review and revise as needed the training curriculum for Community Advisers to include cross-cultural awareness.*

2.2 Food Services

Food is a basic human need and its importance to one's daily life cannot be underestimated. As such, it should rank at the top of the list of student life services to be modified to meet the needs of international students. The current food service provider on campus, Sodexo, meets different dietary need through various vegetarian and vegan options, which is a solid start and shows great promise for future accommodations. According to senior administration, this international company responds positively to the needs of its clients. International students commend the Sodexo employees on their attempts to accommodate their dietary restrictions however, some students are embarrassed by the attention they draw when they ask a new employee too many questions about the food as the line forms behind them. The current situation is less than optimal and should be addressed as quickly as possible. In addition to important dietary restrictions mandated by certain religions (e.g. Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism) there are the more complex and nuanced issues of food handling and preparation. It should never be incumbent on the student to educate the food service staff on these issues, but as the client, the college should request that Sodexo adequately train its employees. Another request made by international students is to have access to a kitchen where they can prepare traditional dishes from their home countries to share among themselves and with others. Familiar dishes can provide a much needed morale boost to a homesick student. Moreover, the ability to prepare traditional food from around the world will be important to future international festivals and other student-led events to help

promote linkages between the foreign and domestic student populations. Student Services staff believe the provision of this type of cooking facility to be a relatively quick fix, one that could be done expeditiously and at nominal cost. Possible locations for this upgraded kitchen are the newly constructed Hoff Hall or a renovated kitchen in one of the three houses. It would require the provision of all kitchen essentials in addition to the major appliances.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, request Sodexo to provide more menu options to meet the needs of current and future religious minorities and to ensure adequate training on food handling and preparation.*
- *In the short term, renovate/upgrade and adequately outfit a kitchen on campus where international students can prepare traditional meals as desired.*

2.3 Religious/Spiritual Life

Potentially, a large proportion of the new international students will be non-Christians offering a rich diversity of religions on campus. The challenge will be how to provide these students with appropriate space and accommodations to practice their spiritual belief system. Currently, there are a limited number of students from the Muslim faith at Castleton who conduct their daily prayers in their rooms. Female Muslims, whose tradition is to pray in the privacy of their homes, are content with this arrangement. Male Muslims, whose practice is to pray publicly in mosques, find this arrangement less desirable. In the eventuality that the number of Muslims on campus increases, there will be greater expectation to provide such a venue. In the interim, there should be at least one space on campus available for non-Christian students where they can practice their religion. Ideally, it should be centrally located for ease of access during the day and to ensure safety. There has been discussion about the allocation of space for a meditation room on campus, which could be such an interim solution if it were also used for prayer. In the longer term, depending on the composition of the international student population, the college should consider the creation of more religious spaces as required. These spaces could be located out of doors in the form of meditation gardens or structures such as teahouses (Asian styled gazebos).

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, identify a room on campus or convert existing space into a multi-purpose room for meditation and multi-faith prayer.*
- *In the medium to long term, construct indoor and/or outdoor religious/spiritual space(s) as required by the international student body.*

2.4 Health Services

The Castleton Wellness Center provides many services to students including general health, counseling, violence prevention and advocacy, and alcohol and drug evaluation and counseling. Currently, four part-time RNs have office hours four half days and one full day each week. Counseling services offer a number of workshops on various mental health issues as well as different counseling groups as needed. With the growth of the undergraduate population—domestic and international students alike—additional staff will be required to meet the wellness needs of all students. Ideally, when considering new staff hires, it would be greatly beneficial to have one or more health care professionals on campus

who has had previous experience working with non-Americans. This is particularly important in the case of counseling staff, who may be required to address social/emotional issues that are specific to the international student experience.

Recommendation: *When hiring staff for the Castleton Wellness Center, consider RN candidates who have had previous experience working with patients from outside the U.S. and similarly, to hire at least one counselor who has specialized training in emotional/social issues pertinent to international students.*

2.5 Career Services

The Office of Career Services (OCS) will be impacted by the influx of international students. In many cases, career planning for this cohort of students will be different from the more traditional Castleton undergraduate's. The mission of OCS is to teach and prepare students to successfully navigate from college to career with clarity, confidence and competence. Helping international students to achieve this mission will require additional staff. Similar to the case of the Castleton Wellness Center, when hiring career counseling staff in the future, it would be useful to seek out those candidates familiar with the international job market who could help Castleton students navigate the overseas job search process. One current international student interviewed for this report was concerned whether his U.S. college degree would be recognized by the financial sector back in his home country. This is just one of many examples of questions that might arise for international students during their time at Castleton. For those international students who wish to pursue a graduate degree in the U.S., it would be beneficial to have a career counselor on staff who knows the visa regulations for graduate students.

Recommendation: *When hiring staff for the Office of Career Services, consider candidates who have had previous experience working with international students and who have had specialized training and/or experience in establishing and maintaining relationships with employers overseas, as well as a working knowledge about options for international students to remain in the US for professional or graduate studies.*

2.6 Transportation Services

International students frequently require access to off-campus services such as applying for a social security card, shopping for supplies they were unable to bring with them, visits to a health clinic or doctor, just to name a few. In the absence of public transportation and a dependable taxi service, to date, these students have relied on Castleton faculty, students and a community volunteer to help them get to the places they needed to go. This ad hoc arrangement will no longer be effective as the student population grows at Castleton. Therefore, the college should consider the provision of a more regular, reliable and safe transportation system to Rutland, which will benefit international students specifically, but also all college students without private vehicles.

Given its rural location, simply arriving at Castleton College can be no small feat without a private vehicle. When someone is traveling for days from their home country the last leg of the trip can be the most grueling for many reasons (fatigue, lost baggage, immigration/customs issues, etc.). As such, Castleton should endeavor to help students with

this last part of their trip by meeting them in person and safely delivering them to campus with minimum stress. The college should decide what it can provide in terms of logistical support to incoming international students. For instance, pick up from the Rutland airport and from the Amtrak stations in Castleton and Rutland will be available as needed. However, airport pick up from the Burlington and Boston will be provided only on a specific day. Whatever policies the college decides to adopt, it is important that they are advertised and made clear to all incoming students in order to align their expectations with what is available.

For the majority of these students coming to Castleton, this will be their first visit to the U.S. and Vermont. As with any student studying overseas, visiting the surrounding area and region should be an integral part of this experience. The college should consider ways to provide these opportunities for international students to travel, which will be covered under later sections of this report (orientation and SGA).

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, continue the development of a regular transportation system between campus and Rutland, currently planned for 2014.*
- *In the short term, create college policies for meeting international students upon arrival in various locations and cities.*
- *In the medium term, offer more opportunities for international students to explore the immediate area and the greater region.*

2.7 SEVIS Services

The importance of international student visa compliance can't be overstated. To date, given the small number of international students on campus, the demand for SEVIS services has been relatively small and effectively managed by senior administration; the primary school official for immigration is the Registrar and the secondary school official is the Director of Admissions. However, with an increase of students on F-1 visas, it will be important that a more junior staff person assumes this role and becomes one of the two school officials for immigration. The tasks demanded of this role are both numerous and time sensitive, thereby requiring someone who can manage them efficiently and effectively. Moreover, the federal immigration regulations change frequently and when trainings are offered by Homeland Security, at least one of the responsible college officials should attend to stay current with the many changes. It is important to the success of international students at Castleton to have someone intimately familiar with all the current regulations who can trouble shoot whenever a problem arises. While SEVIS services have been handled with great care and competence to date, it will become a much greater burden as the number of international students grows.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, because of rolling admissions and the sometimes small window for submitting I-20s, the college should enable an admissions counselor to issue these forms.*
- *In the medium term, have one dedicated staff person to provide all SEVIS services and one back up. At least one of these two school immigration officials should have the time and ability to attend trainings and monitor all new and modified student visa regulations issued by the federal government.*

2.8 Employment

Most international students are anxious to help their families pay for the costs of attending Castleton to the best of their ability, and as such, would like to work part-time while at school. Students studying in the U.S. under an F-1 visa are permitted to work up to 20 hours per week on campus but are ineligible for work-study positions, which are federally funded. Therefore, this cohort of students can only obtain jobs on campus that are departmentally funded. Current international students have expressed interest in working on campus but are frustrated by the limited number of (non-work study) positions available to them. Moreover, because of the extra step required of obtaining a social security card, they believe this puts them at a disadvantage for the few jobs for which they are eligible, because of the delay in their start date. While it is true that international students must have a job in order to apply for a social security card, they may begin work upon providing proof of their application for a card. They will not be able to receive payment until receipt of the card, but they can commence working once they show their supervisor his/her application to the U.S. Social Security Administration.

Recommendations: *The college should facilitate on campus employment for international students by:*

- 1. Increasing the number of non-work study jobs on campus that are departmentally funded and to encourage those supervisors to consider international students for these positions.*
- 2. Educating relevant staff—supervisors, payroll, human resources--about the rules for hiring international students vis a vis social security requirements.*

2.9 Social Support

In addition to the formal support services provided by the college through its staff and faculty, some of which have already been discussed, there are also a number of student-led social support services on campus for new students, such as the Community Advisers (CAs) and the Student Orientation Staff (SOS). In the many meetings and informal discussions held with current Castleton students about this new initiative there was broad acceptance of and even great enthusiasm for diversifying the student population. This acceptance of new students lays a solid foundation on which to build a successful program in the future. Similar to the recommendation made earlier to train CAs on how to facilitate international students' inclusion in residential life, SOS members should have access to this training opportunity as well. To meet other social/emotional needs of the international students, additional support services should be considered. For example, a one-to-one mentoring program that matches an international student with a domestic student, or cultural mentor, could help the former acclimate to the various cultures s/he encounters (e.g. American, college campus). This program should be somewhat structured at the outset with planned events and outings, but hopefully, the friendship would develop organically over time. Another option is to create a conversation partners program, which would provide the international student an opportunity to be paired with a native English speaker to practice conversational English in a more relaxed setting. Regularly scheduled events could be planned for the partners to meet as a group, along with the expectation of student partners meeting on their own time

In addition to what the college provides, community support is paramount, and is especially so to the parents of international students who are far away and concerned about their children's general wellbeing. One interesting and effective model is that which Middlebury College employs connecting local "host families" with international students. A local family is matched with an international student based on shared interests, similar family structures, and other criteria that are enumerated in a survey. Families attend an informational session on the possible types of support they may consider providing for their students. While the student does not live with his/her host family, they benefit from other types of emotional and psychological support such as the host family's attendance at the student's games, performances, recitals or other public events that parents would normally attend, an occasional home cooked meal at the host family's house, a ride to the doctor or pharmacy when the student is ill, a care basket during finals, transportation to and from an airport during break, or just an occasional phone call to check in with the student. One of Castleton's non-American faculty members, who attended Middlebury College and participated in this program, strongly recommends creating something similar to this model for Castleton as it grows its own international student population.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, include training for CAs and SOS members on potential challenges that an international student faces while transitioning to college life at Castleton.*
- *In the short term, create new support structures such as one-to-one mentoring and/or conversational partnerships that form social connections between international and domestic students on campus.*
- *In the medium term, replicate Middlebury's "host family" model to provide emotional support to international students and to build linkages between the college and the greater community.*

3 General

As previously mentioned, there are several general issues that either bridge the academic and student life pieces or that exist at a higher level. These issues will be considered here.

3.1 Mission Statement

The Castleton Mission Statement makes no reference to the world beyond the region in which the school is located. The statement portrays Castleton as a Vermont State College committed to "supporting and improving the region's communities, schools, organizations, businesses and environment"; however, it ignores the realities of our highly inter-connected 21st century world. As currently written, this message seems outdated and potentially off-putting to prospective international students. The mission statement should emphasize Castleton's commitment to educating compassionate members of the global citizenry, who will be prepared to compete in the global economy and to solve the complex and multidisciplinary problems of this century.

Recommendation: *In the medium term, revise/update the Castleton Mission Statement and to align it with that of a 21st century liberal arts college dedicated to improving the world beyond Vermont, New England, and the U.S.*

3.2 Professional Development

An increase in international student enrollment at Castleton will affect all aspects of college life, sometimes in unexpected ways. While many of Castleton's faculty, staff and administration are enthusiastic supporters of the new international student initiative, some have expressed their concern about the impact this initiative will have on the college in general and in the classroom more specifically. A staff member openly spoke about her unease when first interacting with an international student due to a lack of familiarity with her cultural practices and norms. Several international students shared their own personal stories from the classroom when a faculty member unknowingly behaved insensitively towards them. These behaviors and reactions demonstrate an inadequate understanding of the more nuanced issues surrounding international students, which could potentially lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and even conflict. Instead of resolving a problem or crisis in the future, the negative effects of which could be long term, preventing it to the greatest extent possible should be the goal. Part of the preparation process, therefore, should be to present faculty and staff with opportunities for professional development to improve their multi-cultural competencies. For instance, "inclusive teaching", a practice made possible by a low student/staff ratio (as it is at Castleton) helps educators teach in ways that do not exclude students, accidentally or intentionally, from opportunities to learn. This and other relevant topics could be covered during professional development for faculty and staff.

Recommendation: *In the short term, provide professional development opportunities to Castleton faculty and staff to improve their multi-cultural competencies and to provide them with tools to address issues that arise in their classrooms in a competent and sensitive manner.*

3.3 Student Preparation

Similar to the State of Vermont, a liberal culture of acceptance permeates Castleton, as one senior administrator stated. There is significantly less risk at Castleton than at other colleges, he said, and while there will be challenges, the college is positioned to face these. Among Castleton students, there is growing anticipation of the new international student initiative. All students interviewed for this report were excited about attending college with peers from around the world. Nevertheless, some expressed their concern about those Castleton students who have a complete unfamiliarity with people from outside the U.S. It is not a question of being prejudiced or opposed to diversity, but rather there is a student contingent who may be shocked and unprepared for an encounter with a student of a different race, color, ethnicity, or religion. Part of the preparation process therefore should be to mitigate this shock when encountering someone from a different background. There are a myriad of ways this can be achieved using existing resources. The Spartan, Castleton's student newspaper, and WIUV, the student run radio are both avenues of communication that could raise the awareness of multi-culturalism on campus by featuring individual students from different countries. Public service announcements in Huden Hall and during Monday movie nights are another way to disseminate messages, such as how international students enrich the college experience, or to tell the story about the international student initiative. Student leaders

should be used to help facilitate this endeavor. SGA might agree to include this item on the agenda of one of its future open forums for students. The inclusion of international student issues in CA and SOS training was previously mentioned. SGA training in the spring for newly elected delegates could also include a workshop on multi-culturalism and tools for ensuring inclusion of all students on campus. Finally, a workshop on inter-ethnicity or inter-cultural dialog could be offered during first year orientation as a means for new students to become more self-aware of one's own ethnic identity and cultural heritage. All of these initiatives could help to mitigate the aforementioned shock and to prepare students to welcome their international peers to Castleton.

Recommendation: *In the short term, use existing resources to improve multi-cultural competencies of the general student population and to help prepare the domestic student population for interacting with international students on campus through messaging and opportunities to raise awareness.*

3.4 Campus Culture

Castleton should continuously strive to create a campus culture that is hospitable to international students and that publicly showcases the college's celebration of diversity on campus and around the world. Currently, the International Student Club, which is open to both international and American students, is struggling with its identity and low membership. As part of the new international student initiative, the college should consider incorporating this student-led club into a new resource center whose mission would be to promote a supportive, equitable and safe campus environment that values a culture of respect for diverse populations and perspectives. The center would act as a community resource and social network through regular meetings, events, discussions, and social activities that reflect the cultures represented by the college community. Possible events include an international food festival, a guest speaker series, an international photography competition, and international film festivals. The international cultural center would host the events, some of which could be student-run, with at least one staff providing the daily administrative support. All students, faculty and staff would be welcome to participate in all the center sponsored events and as such, the college should allocate an annual activities budget to it.

Recommendation: *In the immediate/medium term, establish and fund a new resource center on campus whose mission is the promotion of a supportive, equitable and safe campus environment that values a culture of respect for diverse populations and perspectives.*

3.5 International Student Summer Transition Program

As noted in the introduction to this section of the report, campus internationalization is not about one thing; it is about everything. Therefore, efforts must permeate every level of the college. One completely new but essential component needs to be added that bridges the academic and student services needs of all incoming students from outside the US; that is, an international student orientation program. This program will help to ensure a smooth transition into college, and life, in the US. It should be planned for four days prior to the new student orientation, which international students should also be expected to attend. It should focus on those services and issues that are specific to them such as Immigration/SEVIS, navigating the U.S. classroom and college campus, and language and academic support.

Time should be allocated to explore the surrounding area to obtain an overview of the region in which Castleton is located, through a variety of recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, swimming, boating, etc. There should also be opportunities to complete the more mundane settling-in tasks (shopping for food/bedding, opening a bank account, cell phone subscriptions, social security card application, etc.). Recruiting existing international students as mentors for this program would be beneficial to the new students, which is similar to the successful model used for Trio's Summer Transition Program. This is also the appropriate time for students to meet their "host family" if that initiative is adopted. If possible, this program should run concurrently with the Trio Summer Transition Program and as such, there would be opportunities to co-program, especially some of the social activities. This would present incoming international students with opportunities to meet and develop friendships with other Castleton students prior to the new student orientation and to the commencement of school.

Recommendation: *To design and implement a comprehensive Summer Transition Program for incoming international students and to co-program whenever possible with the Trio Summer Transition Program.*

3.6 Infrastructure and Staffing

The first part of this report has reviewed progress to date to internationalize Castleton and recommended means to fill the gaps in academic and student services specifically, and across the college more generally. It would be incomplete however, without addressing the infrastructure and staffing needed to support these interventions. At the very minimum and in the immediate future, an office for international student services should be established and staffed with an international student adviser. This office's primary purpose would be the management and oversight of the implementation of the action plan, which will be written once there is consensus on the recommendations from this report. In addition to this function, having an international student adviser is important for recruitment purposes. Research shows that if attending a live, online video presentation, 72% of prospective students are interested in speaking with an international student services representative.² Therefore, this new staff person will have to allocate at least part of his/her time working closely with the international student recruiter, another new staff position to be discussed in the second part of this report.

Over the medium—ideally, the short term—the office for international student services should be housed in a building with a central location on campus. In addition to the obvious benefits of having a space in which to work, this physical structure would also symbolize Castleton's commitment to internationalize, and should be showcased in recruitment materials, which will be discussed in the report's second part. As international student enrollment and services come on line, this building would become multi-purpose by being a venue for different activities pertinent to international students (e.g., ESOL classes, SEVIS workshops, the International Student Summer Transition Program, etc.). It could also be the home for the college's new cultural center as described above, should that recommendation be adopted, and as such, could host its events whenever possible. In addition to providing a

² *Recruiting Abroad: Understanding the Expectations and Behaviors of Prospective International Students*, Noel-Levitz LLC., 2013.

space for various international themed events and activities, the new building should provide drop-in and advising services for international students. It should serve the purpose of being a safe environment where international students can go to relax, hang out, or to simply escape even just briefly from the stress of being a foreigner. Finally, the building should serve as an informal gathering place for any and all students, interested in meeting international students or learning something about life outside the U.S. Depending on space availability, Castleton's study abroad office could co-locate with the international student services office in this new building, whose name should reflect the global mission of the college.

Recommendations:

- *In the short term, an office of international student (support) services should be established and staffed by an international student adviser to oversee the implementation of the forthcoming action plan.*
- *In the short term, allocate a building on campus to house international student services and to host events and activities as required*
- *In the short/medium term, evolve the function of this building to become a campus center for international students with the provision of services specific to their needs*
- *In the immediate/medium term, establish an international cultural center to be located in this building*
- *In the medium term, move the study abroad services into the building and establish Castleton's "Center for Global Education" (working title).*

Part 2: International Student Recruitment

The 2013 *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* released on November 11th found the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by seven percent to a record high of 819,644 students. A strong increase in the number of “new” international students, those enrolling for the first time at a U.S. college or university in fall 2013, indicates that this growth trend will likely continue. New enrollments in 2012/13 were up ten percent from the prior year. Both total enrollment and new enrollment had slowed after the economic slowdown in 2007/08, and both have now rebounded to previous high rates of growth.³ This growth is positive news for Castleton as it launches its international student initiative. However, a central question remains: how will Castleton navigate its own recruitment on this rising wave of international students to the U.S?

Castleton’s current international student recruitment efforts are largely reactive; they respond to opportunities to bring students from outside the U.S. to campus as they arise. The current international student population reflects this trend, with a large proportion (70%) being Canadian, the majority of whom are male ice hockey players. Additional students were either actively recruited by coaches in other sports (women’s ice hockey, basketball) or were the result of individual faculty members’ efforts. In order to reach the goal of 5% by 2023, Castleton will have to modify this reactive model to a more proactive and systematic one. The first step should be the development of an international student recruitment strategy; one that is based on evidence from research in the field of international student recruitment, while simultaneously respecting the college’s foundational documents, namely the Castleton Mission Statement and its recently launched 10-year strategic plan. Its recruitment targets should be aligned with its mission and based on a realistic assessment of its capacity to meet the needs of target student segments. Castleton should also develop a communication plan that addresses the questions of brand/name recognition, messaging, and communication tools. Other issues pertinent to the recruitment process are data management and financial aid. All of these issues will be discussed below.

1. **An Emerging International Student Recruitment Strategy**

Castleton should develop, adopt and implement an international recruitment strategy to guide its decisions on how to draw from the growing pool of potential students from around the world. This strategy should be developed with input from representatives from the Admissions Office and it should be led by the staff person who will oversee its implementation. This section covers several of the components of this strategy with a number of preliminary recommendations on questions of pace, target countries, and target students. While there is unfortunately, no simple magic formula for achieving international student enrollment growth, Castleton can and should develop a holistic recruitment strategy based on research, relationships, and technology to make their international student recruitment more purposeful, responsive and ultimately, productive.

1.1. Pace

³ *Open Doors 2013: International Students in the United States and Study Abroad by American Students are at an All-Time High (Press Release)*, Institute of International Education (IIE), November 11, 2013.

The debate around the question of pace—the rate at which Castleton should increase its international student population—breaks into two positions. Some staff/faculty advocate for aiming to get a critical mass, or posse, to campus at one time, while others believe a phased-in or -up approach is preferable. There are sound reasons for both. To make a recommendation on the issue of pace, one should look to the foundational documents of the college. The introduction to “Castleton on the Move” states that the core values of the college permeate the plan. As such, any new initiative should be aligned with this document and subsequent institutional strategies should reflect it. In considering the question “how fast should Castleton increase its international student population” the answer is evident in the first two destinations of the strategic plan. Castleton will increase its undergraduate population through a “measured, incremental process...while expanding our recruitment efforts into each of the fifty states and all countries where we can develop sound recruitment opportunities” (Destination 2: Growth). And, “As Castleton grows through incremental increases in undergraduate enrollment...the college will need to build the capacity to support and deliver a high-quality educational experience to a larger number of undergraduate students” (Destination 1: Undergraduate Education). The pace of international student growth therefore, should be measured and incremental, responsive to sound recruitment opportunities, and not to exceed the college’s capacity to support and deliver a high-quality education to them. The latter reference to the college’s capacity correlates with “Part I: Internationalizing Castleton” and the recommendations made in that section to grow and improve the various support services for international students. In practical terms, a measured and incremental approach would look like this: build on Castleton’s progress to date through sound recruitment opportunities, to establish a larger track record in terms of numbers of international students and services available to support them, which the college could then showcase for more aggressive recruitment efforts in the long term.

Recommendation: *To employ a phase-in approach for international student recruitment by building on progress made to date in order to improve Castleton’s track record, which it can then showcase for medium and longer term recruitment purposes.*

1.2. Short-Term Target Countries

Peru is a country with which Castleton has had a history and currently has strong relations and as such, it is a logical target country for international student recruitment in the immediate future. In fall 2013, there is one Spanish TA and one undergraduate student from Peru at Castleton College. The Spanish Department is led by a Peruvian faculty member. A recent Castleton graduate is serving in the Peace Corps in Peru. During the last few years, there have been a number of efforts to create name recognition for Castleton among high school students in Peru through recruitment visits by faculty and staff, as well as a summer cultural exchange program at Castleton for Peruvian students in 2011. It makes sense to invest additional resources in recruitment from Peru by building on progress to date and capitalizing on the strong personal connections Castleton has with this country. Therefore, Castleton should focus its recruitment efforts on this country in the short term.

China continues to be the top sender country for the fourth year in a row (up 21.4% in 2012/13 from the previous year)⁴. Castleton has already made some inroads to the immense market of Chinese students seeking a higher education in the U.S, and there is great potential for more students at Castleton. The college recently graduated a student from China (2013) who remains in the US under the Optional Practical Training program. The college also has two faculty members with strong professional ties to and interests in China. One of these faculty members also serves as the Head of Curriculum Development at the Vermont International Academy, a college-preparatory program founded in 2011 with four sites in China (soon to be six). The first class of approximately 50 students will graduate in the spring 2014 and be bound for college in the U.S., with many an increasing number of students to follow in the coming years. In 2013, Castleton formalized a relationship with an agent, The Sakae Institute, in Cambridge, Massachusetts to help with recruitment from China. Also in 2013, the college hosted a visit from a representative from another college preparatory high school in China that partners with Lyndon Institute. These past and ongoing efforts as well as strong direct professional relations with Chinese secondary schools will help Castleton to build on its initial success in China. Castleton should focus its recruitment efforts on this country in the immediate future, and possibly into the medium and longer term as well.

Recommendation: *Given past history, current relations, and future growth potential, Castleton should target Peru and China in the immediate future to strengthen the school's track record in international recruitment.*

1.3 Medium to Long Term Target Countries

Identifying target countries in the medium and long terms will depend on essential questions to be answered while developing and finalizing an international recruitment strategy. For instance, does Castleton wish to recruit from the three largest markets--China, India and South Korea--from which 49% of all international students originate?⁵ Or, should Castleton consider diversifying by recruiting beyond these three and build a portfolio of countries that includes the four leading emerging markets of Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Vietnam, and Turkey?⁶ ("Emerging markets" are characterized by their growth potential in terms of sending their students overseas to study, and is not synonymous with the same term used in business and economics.) It is difficult to answer these questions at this time, because some of the decisions will be informed by the types and level of support services and financial aid Castleton offers to future international students. As an illustration, Saudi students, while having financial means to attend college in the U.S. have lower academic preparedness than their peers from China and India; therefore, should Castleton wish to recruit Saudi students, it should ensure they have the capacity to absorb a population that may have more limited English skills. Schools that wish to diversify their portfolio of countries by looking at emerging markets tend to already have had an influx of students from one or a few select countries. This over-reliance on limited source countries can pose a risk as it increases the chance of losing a large share of the institution's international student population if some real

⁴ Opendoors: Fast Facts, IIE, November 11, 2013.

⁵ "Beyond More of the Same: The Top Four Emerging Markets for International Student Recruitment", World Education Services, October 2012, p. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

world event occurs that slows down or even stops the supply of students from that country. Moreover, having too large of an influx of students from just one or a few countries can have unintended negative consequences on campus culture and diversity. Castleton is not at this stage yet, but should bear these risks in mind when developing a long term recruitment strategy. In the interim, because of the continued growth from the big three, especially China, as well as the aforementioned relations Castleton is building in this east Asian country, Castleton should include it among its medium and long term target countries.

Recommendation: *To develop, adopt, and implement an international student recruitment strategy that includes China as a target country but that keeps in mind the possible over-representation of students from this country.*

1.4 Target Students

Under Destination 2 (Growth) in “Castleton on the Move” one of the courses reads, “Castleton will better harmonize what prospective undergraduates seek in a college education with what the college offers”. It continues by describing how it will achieve this, through: concentrated recruitment efforts on students who already seek what the college offers, and the provision of more of what prospective students seek in curricular programs, extra-curricular programs, and in preparation for careers, citizenship and meaningful lives. This latter will be informed by market research, which should include looking at the top fields of study demanded by prospective international students originating from Castleton’s target countries. This course of action as described in Castleton’s strategic plan should apply to all undergraduates—domestic and international alike—the achievement of which will likely lead to greater retention of students.

In the context of prospective international students, a logical place to begin is with the current international students’ programs of study. The chart below shows that more than one-third of this population (37%) is pursuing a degree in business, with exercise science and sports administration being the next two most popular programs at 13% each, which likely reflects the large proportion of international student athletes on campus.

International Students by Program of Study

Program	Number	% of Total
Biology	2	7%
Business	11	37%
Computer Information System	1	3%
Education	2	7%
Exercise Science	4	13%
Nursing	1	3%
Philosophy	1	3%
Physical Education	1	3%
Psychology	2	7%
Sports Administration	4	13%
Undecided	1	3%

According to the 2012/13 Open Doors report, business/management is the top field of study for Chinese students at 29% of the total.⁷ This means there is already a degree of harmonization between what prospective Chinese students seek with what Castleton offers, with evidence to support this given the popularity business among current international students. Incidentally, the 2013 Chinese graduate majored in business at Castleton. Business and management is the top field of study for all international students attending college in the U.S. (21.8%) with engineering a close second at 18.8%.⁸ Considering this, Castleton should determine the specific programs within its business administration core that are most popular and sought by prospective students in its target countries and make programmatic changes in response to these findings. For example, in revisiting a recommendation from section 1.3 New Programs and “Tracks” of Study under Academic Services in Part I of this report, depending on the results of this research, Castleton should consider adding an international business program if that is what prospective students are seeking.

Recommendation: *To concentrate recruitment efforts on students in those countries (e.g., China) who seek a degree in business and to re-evaluate Castleton’s business administration core to determine specific programs that are most frequently sought by prospective international students and to either strengthen or add these to the core.*

2. An Emerging Communication Plan

Research shows that international students want to communicate throughout the enrollment process. One recent study (early 2013) conducted by Noel-Levitz and CollegeWeekLive of prospective international students in 146 countries discovered that 72% of students said communicating was important at all three stages—before applying, after acceptance, and after enrolling.⁹ This reinforces the necessity of creating a communication plan that reaches students at every stage of the search, application, and enrollment process.

Prospective international students are a highly heterogeneous group. Differences in academic preparedness, financial resources and cultures translate into differences in what information students look for and where they look for it during their college search. Understanding the differences in international student profiles can help Castleton to develop an effective communication plan with different outreach strategies.

2.1 Brand

Research has shown that the top reason international students decide to leave their own countries to attend college is their strong interest in a particular school—64% of respondents in one study said they chose to leave their home country because of a particular university.¹⁰

⁷ Institute of International Education. (2013). "Fields of Study of Students from Selected Places of Origin, 2012/13." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

⁸ Institute of International Education. (2013). "International Students by Field of Study, 2011/2012 - 2012/13." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

⁹ Noel-Levitz (2013) "Recruiting Abroad: Understanding the Expectations and Behaviors of Prospective International Students", p.8.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 4.

This finding means that Castleton should have a solid brand in the countries or regions it is targeting and invest in increasing its brand awareness and relationship building efforts to achieve recruitment goals. Elements of this brand should profile key faculty, centers of excellence (curricular and extra-curricular), and the Castleton's Honors Program. College rankings are important to prospective students, thus, if Castleton has been recently ranked in any study or report, this should be included as part of its brand.

Recommendation: *Because international students are drawn to particular schools in the U.S., Castleton should research its own strategic position and comparative advantages, and incorporate these into a brand for prospective international students.*

2.2 Messaging

There is significant variance among audiences both geographically and generation-wise. For instance, in China, where parents are heavily involved in the college decisions for their children, Castleton should engage this audience through messages tailored to parents' top concerns. Chinese parents are less concerned with financial aid than they are with safety on campus. Therefore, Vermont's low crime rate and Castleton's effective on-campus security should be highlighted in its message to this cohort—Chinese parents. Chinese students have career-oriented motives for studying in the U.S., and as such, their top priority in selecting an American school will be post-graduation career prospects. Keeping this in mind, Castleton's message to prospective Chinese students should highlight the diversity and quality of services provided by its Office of Career Services, examples of job placement of Chinese alumni, and/or testimonies by company representatives about the high caliber of Castleton graduates. The interviews with current European students at Castleton—namely, Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland—revealed their reason for choosing to study at Castleton at a significantly higher financial cost than enrolling in their own publicly funded universities was the ability to pursue their sport while earning a college degree—an opportunity not available in their own countries. Therefore, this message of being able to pursue athletic and academic goals simultaneously and not having to choose one over the other should be part of the message for this audience. Highlighting Castleton's many strengths will be helpful in developing effective communications, but the careful crafting and tailoring of various messages for different target audiences will result in a highly effective communication plan and ultimately, a more successful outcome for recruitment. Some of Castleton's particular strengths mentioned by students, faculty and staff during the research phase for this report are listed in one of the appendices for future message development.

Recommendation: *Castleton should tailor its messages by country or region so that they have maximum appeal to the different target audiences.*

2.3 Communication Tools

Appropriate and effective use of communication tools varies among regions and countries. While email is the most preferred method of communication in all regions, there are some notable variations in other preferences. As such, Castleton should develop a variety of tools and commit resources to developing those that are most commonly used by the prospective students in target countries. For example, live chat is the second highest-rated method of communication for Chinese and Latin American students. Since China and Peru are

Castleton's short-term target countries, it should invest resources into creating more opportunities to host online discussion forums such as live chats and video Webcasts.

College websites are the number one resource for prospective students when learning about the higher education institutions they wish to apply to or enroll in after acceptance. Therefore, it is important that Castleton make its website more accessible to this target audience when it undergoes its website redesign in spring 2014. It should set up a separate section for international students and ensure that its content is relevant and up to date. This will give students an opportunity and hopefully, a reason to complete an inquiry form so that a relationship with them can be started. There is significant guidance on "website internationalization", beyond the scope of this report. However, at this juncture of the process, it is encouraging to know those resources exist and should be used when needed. Some essential elements to an effective website are: a clear link for international students on the home page, a school description with quotes or profiles from current international students, tuition and related costs and the amount required for the first year of study (required for the I-20 form), admission timelines, contact information for all staff dealing with international students, Visa/SEVIS information, accreditation information, international metrics, a downloadable application or inquiry form.

Finally, there is the question of whom students are interested in speaking with during online video presentations. The 2013 Noel-Levitz study mentioned above concluded that prospective international students in general wish to speak with: an admission representative (79%), the international student services representative (72%), a financial aid rep (70%), a current international student (61%), professors (52%) and alumni (41%).¹¹ In China, specifically, only 47% of Chinese respondents want to speak with a financial aid representative during live chats,¹² which corresponds with the research that shows that Chinese students are more likely to rely on personal/family sources to finance their college education. Another interesting finding is students' strong desire to communicate with current international students, which ranked above professors and alumni. Castleton should therefore look for opportunities to involve currently enrolled international students in online video presentations. International student services staff scored high, second behind the admissions representatives, during live chats. Involving those staff early in the process might provide a greater opportunity to strengthen engagement with prospective students and put them in contact with someone who can address their specific needs and concerns. Therefore, Castleton should create an office of international student services and staff it with an adviser for the purpose of being able to participate in live chats with prospective students.

Recommendations:

- *Invest in developing the ability to conduct more live chats and video Webcasts for international students*
- *During the website redesign in spring 2014, ensure that Castleton's new site includes clear navigation to current and relevant international student information, and to use the substantial resources on how to internationalize a college website.*

¹¹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹² Ibid.

- *Include current international students and the new international student services representative in live chats and video Webcasts for prospective international students.*

3. Other Issues

3.1 Data Management

As mentioned above, differences among international students result in different information-seeking behaviors. Therefore, by viewing all international students as the same, as Castleton has done in the past, valuable information is lost, and ineffective recruitment results. In order to improve its recruitment overseas, Castleton must have the ability to code its prospective international students by country, which will hopefully be possible with the advent of the new admissions software, Recruiter. Also, to better integrate the growing diversity of country and student profiles and the changing needs of international students into an informed recruitment strategy, Castleton should invest in and deploy a systematic framework of analyzing the enrollment funnel and regularly research student expectations and experiences.

Recommendation: *To invest in data management resources that will help Castleton to:*

1. *Differentiate the countries of origins of prospective international students for a more thorough understanding of student differences that will help Castleton to prioritize its outreach strategies*
2. *Track and analyze the international recruitment channels for different target groups for the purpose of adapting recruitment strategies accordingly.*

3.2 Financial Aid

The results of the Noel-Levitz study on prospective international student behavior showed that financial assistance ranked as the top concern of respondents that might prevent students from studying outside the U.S. More than half of respondents (56%) cited funding as their greatest concern—far greater than the second and third ranked concerns of safety in the surrounding area (8%) and campus safety (6%).¹³ This sentiment was echoed by all current international students at Castleton interviewed for this report, who said that while they hoped to complete their degrees at Castleton, the main determinant would be their families' ability to support them financially for the duration of their study. China was a bit of an outlier in the study, with the lowest number of respondents citing funding—40%. Safety in the surrounding areas was ranked as the second greatest concern of Chinese respondents—19% (more than double the 8% figure for all respondents cited above).¹⁴ When queried about funding for their education, U.S. aid/scholarships and personal/family were the top two sources of funding for all regions. However, 75% of Chinese respondents listed personal/family first.¹⁵ This reflects the burgeoning middle class in China and its strong commitment to their children being educated at a higher educational institution in the U.S.

Castleton offers an international student scholarship of up to \$2,500 per year to non-citizens and non-residents of the U.S. that can be renewed for up to four years depending on

¹³ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

academic performance. This scholarship is a solid start for financial assistance for this cohort who is ineligible for U.S. government funded financial aid. The information about this scholarship should be included in the school's communications with prospective international students. In the long-term, Castleton should seek opportunities to fund additional scholarships for international students, through the Advancement Office.

Recommendations:

- *Castleton should publicize its International Student Scholarship by putting links to financial information on website pages for international admissions and communications sent to international students*
- *With the Advancement Office's help, Castleton should explore opportunities to create and fund additional scholarships and/or other financial support mechanisms for international students.*

4 Recruitment Methods and Staffing

There is a wide variety of international recruitment methods at colleges' disposal. For the purposes of this report, they are grouped into two categories—"armchair" and active—and each method is briefly outlined below for possible inclusion in Castleton's international recruitment strategy. This list is by no means exhaustive since higher education institutions are creating and experimenting with new and innovative recruitment methods all the time. Each option has a different level of effort and corresponding costs. The first set of "armchair" methods should be employed—and in some cases already are—in the short-term. These require relatively small upfront investments of time and money. On the other hand, the active methods of recruiting will require significantly greater investments and in some cases, will necessitate the participation of senior administration. As such additional research and input from staff is required to determine which of these methods Castleton should employ in the short-, medium- and long-terms.

4.1 "Armchair" Methods

CollegeWeekLive is the leading channel where students and colleges meet on line. More than one million students from 192 countries use CollegeWeekLive to help navigate college admission. This live channel provides access to expert presentations. Moreover, it enables students, parents, and secondary school counselors to gain insights about American colleges through conversations with current students, admission representatives, and others at every stage of the enrollment process. Castleton currently is a member of CollegeWeekLive and should consider becoming a member of CollegeWeekLive International next year.

Castleton has used vendors and agencies in the past to support its recruitment efforts with limited success. The vast number and variety of these third parties is overwhelming. Recently, Castleton engaged the services of the Sakae Institute to help with recruitment efforts primarily in China but other East Asian countries as well. The value of this agency will be known in the next one to two years. In recent years, Fulbright sponsored a transfer student from Nigeria at Castleton and this year there is one Fulbright TA from Peru teaching at the college. Fulbright as a government agency is one with which Castleton should continue to build its relationship in the future. Another potential third-party with whom Castleton should consider working is World Learning. This international non-profit offers a

number of fully-funded scholarships to students from around the globe. World Learning is a member of Education Vermont USA, as is Castleton.

EducationUSA is a U.S. Department of State-supported network of hundreds of advising centers around the world called Regional Educational Advising Centers or REACs. EducationUSA advisers provide millions of international students with comprehensive and current information about how to apply to U.S. colleges and universities. They also offer different services to colleges and universities to support their international student recruitment, through collaboration with its REACs, international conferences and workshops, the provision of the latest research and guidance on international marketing tools and strategies. Castleton should consider increasing its use of this organization's services, which are mostly free-of-charge.

Education Vermont USA (EDVTUSA) is a consortium of colleges, secondary schools, State and Federal agencies with the focus of promoting Vermont as an educational destination of choice. Castleton is currently a member of EDVTUSA. The advantages of membership are access to the resources and mentorship of member institutions with extensive international education experience, inclusion in all EDVTUSA promotional materials including its website, access to EDVTUSA professional training and international marketing initiatives, and a voting presence and voice on the Board of EDVTUSA. The Board actively shares information on international student recruitment, study abroad, organizational structures, best practices, and programs. EDVTUSA is also recognized by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Governor, Agency of Education, Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the business community as the consortium promoting international education and supporting economic development through international education in the State of Vermont. Castleton should continue its membership in this consortium, which although relatively young, will become increasingly valuable to higher education institutions in Vermont both as a resource for information and promotion globally.

4.2 Active Methods

Developing strategic partnerships with potential feeder schools overseas is a method that an increasing number of higher educational institutions are employing. Castleton is already poised to develop such a partnership with the Vermont International Academy in China where it has a direct relation through a faculty member who serves as the academy's curriculum director. Recently, Castleton commenced a new relationship with another potential feeder school through Lyndon Institute. A representative from one of the Chinese high schools that partners with Lyndon Institute through the Sino-US Global Education Foundation visited Castleton in November 2013. In the short-term, Castleton should build on these existing relations and seek other opportunities to create partnerships with additional institutions. In China, where face-to-face meetings among senior leadership is of critical value to the work culture and almost a pre-requisite to accomplishing professional goals, Castleton should send its President or Academic Dean to China in the coming year to visit VIA and other institutions identified.

Concurrently, in the short-term, Castleton should consider increasing its participation in college fairs at or visits to private college preparatory schools in the U.S. that have an

international student population. In Vermont alone there are at least two—Lyndon Institute and St. Johnsbury Academy—that could be visited. Admissions staff should endeavor to visit these two campuses with a current international Castleton student who is also an alumna of the preparatory school whenever possible.

There are a number of summer programs around the state bringing high school students from other countries to Vermont. Castleton should explore partnering with these existing programs and propose, for example, to host the summer students on campus for a day to take a "sample" college class, tour the facilities, and participate in other activities. This could be an interim step to a longer term recruitment strategy of Castleton establishing its own full-fledged program, as outlined in the next section.

As part of a long-term recruitment strategy in one or more targeted countries and where Castleton can identify a content niche, a summer program or institute on campus for high school students, both domestic and international, could be considered. As mentioned earlier, international students who attend summer programs at an American college are more likely to apply to that institution's undergraduate program. Castleton has tried this model in the past with a small group of students from Peru who visited campus in the summer 2011. It did not yield any applicants. Nevertheless, useful information was gained. A summer institute or program will require an upfront investment in personnel to set up and coordinate the program and, at best, such an endeavor will break even on direct costs. Therefore, careful consideration by a college committee should be given to questions of Castleton's comparative advantage vis a vis existing summer programs in Vermont and its target population. It is recommended here that additional research for this option be conducted when the appropriate time arises.

Finally, in the long-run, Castleton could consider the idea of developing a satellite campus overseas. This has been done successfully by colleges in the U.S. (e.g., Lakeland College in Wisconsin). In order for this option to work, however, a significant level of commitment is required in terms of staff time and financial resources. The commitment also must be long-term as the time required to establish a formal presence in another country can take at least several years. The decision to invest significant resources in one target country carries with it inherent risks and obviously, should be carefully weighed.

Recommendation: *Immediate implementation and/or increased focus on the armchair recruitment efforts, simultaneous implementation of the first two active methods, with further exploration of the latter two.*

4.3 Staffing

Currently, Castleton's international recruitment and admissions are led by one staff person who estimates 15-20% of her time is allocated to this role. This will be insufficient in the future as Castleton ramps up its international recruitment efforts. The recommendation here is to have one full time international recruiter lead the development of an international recruitment strategy for Castleton, and subsequently, to oversee its implementation. This staff person would work closely with the international student services representative, who in

turn, could assume responsibility for some of the admissions-related tasks, especially those that occur post-acceptance and pre-arrival to campus.

Recommendation: *Castleton should create a new position for a full time international recruiter who would be responsible for the development of a comprehensive international recruitment strategy and would subsequently, manage its implementation.*